

The Boxing Biographies Newsletter

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Each new edition we will feature one of the fighters from our new and fast growing web site which, unlike any other site, provides fistic fans with the actual fight reports as published in the press from 1850 to present day. Whenever possible they will be reproduced along with the photographs used in the original article so readers get a real taste of some of the rich history of the Noble Science across the years. In addition we also provide wide range of articles written especially for the site by our small team of in house staff. Please visit our site you will not be disappointed and we look forward to your comments and suggestions on how we may make improvements to the site.

Firstly I would like to thank the many visitors to the site who have contacted me in the last few weeks and the helpful comments made regards future content . I decided to wait for a few weeks before embarking on this next newsletter so I could take stock of the situation and of course prepare future material. One of the suggestions made was to put together a full listing of the sources used in the compilation of the various biographies as this would a helpful resource tool for visitors. A terrific example, which I urge people to visit, of a web site which will be included in such a listing is the site put together by Tony Triem, Boxing Historian Las Vegas, NV www.members.cox.net/boxer561 .

The majority of material being placed on the site at this time is concerned with the early bare knuckle era taken, from a wide range of source material, which also includes a considerable number of fine works of artwork which so often accompanied the articles printed in these early years of sports reporting. Some shortened examples of new additions to the site are as follows;

JOHN BROUGHTON AND JACK SLACK

THE first Boxing Champion of England of whom any record has been handed down to us was Figg. *Fistiana* or *The Oracle of the Ring* gives his date as 1719. Strictly, however, his title to fame rests more securely on his excellence with the cudgel and small sword than on fisticuffs, and the real father of the ring was John Broughton, who was Champion from 1738 to 1750. Broughton had a famous place of entertainment known as the Amphitheatre, in Hanway Yard, Oxford Road, near the site of a like establishment that had been kept by Figg. Here, with pit and gallery and boxes arranged about a high stage, displays of boxing were given from time to time, and here it was that sportsmen first learned to enjoy desperate struggles between man and man.

As has already been shown, Broughton formulated the rules which for many years to come were to govern fighting, and which, much as they leave to the imagination as well as to the discretion of officials, tell us with the utmost simplicity the conditions under which men fought. For eighteen years John Broughton was undisputed Champion of England. That probably meant very little, for boxing had not yet become popular and its science was in its extremest infancy. I would gladly make the foolish and unprofitable bet that if Broughton, in his prime and with his bare fists, could be transplanted to these latter days, he would not stand for one minute before Joe Beckett with the gloves on. (That is less of a handicap than it sounds to any boxer who has never used his bare knuckles.)

Broughton's fight with Slack can by no standard be called great, but it has its peculiar importance in showing us how a certain degree of skill hampered by over-confidence and lack of training may be at the mercy of courage, strength, and enterprise. Broughton's knowledge of boxing, compared with the science of Jem Belcher and Tom Spring, must have been negligible; but years of practice must have taught him something. As far as we can gather, Slack knew less than a small boy in his first term at school. He was a butcher by trade, and one day at Hounslow Races he had "words" with the champion, who laid about him with a horse-whip. Thereupon Slack challenged Broughton, and the fight took place at the Amphitheatre on April 10th, 1750.

There was nothing elegant about Jack Slack. His attitude was ugly and awkward, he was strong and healthy but quite untrained in our meaning of the word. He only stood 5 feet 8¹/₂ inches but weighed close upon 14 stone nearly as much as his antagonist, who was a taller man. Broughton was eager for the fight or for the money to be derived from it. He regarded Slack with the utmost contempt and made no sort of preparation. So afraid was he that the butcher might not turn up at the last minute that he gave him ten guineas to make sure of him ! The betting was 10- 1 on Broughton when the men appeared in the ring. After all, as boxing went in these days, he did know something about defence, and he was master of two famous blows, one for the body and one under the ear, which were said to terrify his opponents.

**How Jim Coffey Got his start
In the Boxing Game
Irish Giant Began Boxing Career Four Years ago Tonight**

It will be four years tonight since Jim Coffey, the Irish giant, set out on that ring Career which his multitude of Hibernian admirers fondly hoped would land him at the worlds championship goal. Not that they have entirely abandoned hope , for the Irish are of sanguine disposition, but their hero's defeat this month by Frank Moran in New York, following the knockout administered to the motorman by the same sorrel topped gladiator last October, has dampened their enthusiasm.

The fourth anniversary of Coffey's ring debut is almost coincident with his twenty fifth birthday, for the January of 1891 was nearing its close when Coffey first opened his eyes upon the world at Roscommon, Ireland. He was christened James Joseph, and grew up Into a big broth of a lad working on his fathers farm, attending school occasionally and wrestling with the neighbor boys.

Jim was a good rough and tumble wrestler, but he had scarcely heard Of boxing when he decided to emigrate to America. The big fellow landed in Boston In April, 1910, and immediately hiked to Pawtucket R. I., where he had friends. There he worked for a time in a bleachery, and later got a Job as a teamster in Providence. Less than a year after landing in America he arrived in New York, where he got employment as a motorman on a surface car.

Ned Turner and Jack Scoggins

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were, then, plenty of good little men, though we hear less about them than we do of the champions. Jack Scroggins was one, Ned Turner another. Scroggins may, by present standards, be called a light middle-weight: he was just under 11 stone. Turner was 10 stone 4 lb. just over the present light-weight limit. The first time they fought the ring was broken by rowdy spectators, and the result was a draw.

The second battle took place at Sawbridgeworth on June 10th, 1817, and Jack Scroggins, who had never yet been beaten, staked £120 to £80 on the event. Ned Turner the Welshman referred to by George Borrow in the passage quoted in the Introduction was a very fine boxer, and at the outset put up an almost impenetrable defence. Some minutes in the first round went by before the two men really began to fight. Scroggins was accustomed to dash in and hit his man at the very beginning, but something in Turner's attitude daunted him, and he held off. But a start had to be made, and after a while he did rush, came close to his man, and gave him a light hit from which he fell. Scroggins had been a sailor and was a jolly little man, ever eager to see the bright side of a situation. In the present case he was absurdly elated at his trifling success, and dashed in again.

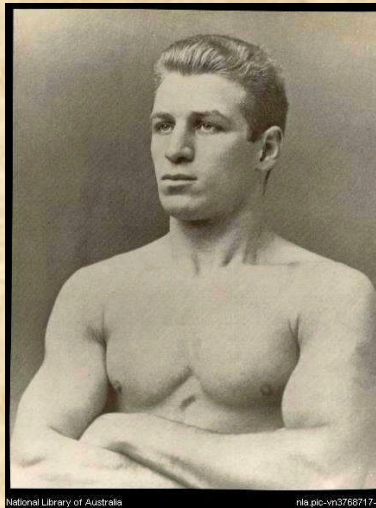
This time the Welshman caught him hard on the face twice, following these blows with another in the ribs, but when they wrestled for a fall he was underneath. Scroggins saw now that he had taken on a better man than he had ever faced before, and was correspondingly cautious. Round after round Turner showed himself quicker with his fists, the sailor stronger in a close. In the

fourth round Turner sent in a vicious blow on his opponent's neck which, Scroggins said later on, decided the fight. It is true that he threw Turner again and again after that, but he was a hurt man.

At the end of the fifth round a troop of Yeomanry were seen approaching, clattering down the lane which ran alongside the field of battle. It was thought at first by the ring officials and spectators that these soldiers had come to spoil sport; but as a matter of fact they had heard of the fight and had merely determined to see it.

Next weeks edition is devoted to

Joe Choynski



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